Librarians and Archivists to Palestine

DS128.4 Zine (excerpts)
Interrogation at Israeli border station,
Aqaba – Eilat, June 22, 2013:

Why are you coming from Jordan?
Who do you know in Jordan?
Why would your friend from Canada go to Jordan to find a job? You mean there are no jobs in Canada?
Have you been to Israel before? Why did you come to Israel?
Why didn’t you land in Israel?
Did you pack your bags yourself?
Why do you have Arabic dictionaries? Do you speak Arabic? Why did you learn Arabic? Why didn’t you choose another language like Chinese or French? Why Arabic? Where did you learn Arabic?
Why aren’t you telling us the truth? What are you trying to hide from us?
Why do you have a shortwave radio? Is it to listen to local broadcasts?
Why do you have an umbrella?
Where did you buy your suitcases?
Why are you carrying fingernail polish?
And—after undergoing a strip search and having everything in my bag (including underwear and socks) combed over with a security wand (this after putting my suitcases initially through an x-ray machine), a process which took forty-five minutes:
Would you like us to help you re-pack your bags?

—Submitted by Blair Kuntz
Throughout our travels in the West Bank we saw how Palestinians' freedom of movement is controlled and restricted by the Israeli government, the military, and through settler violence.

Palestinians are virtually imprisoned where they live.

I spotted kids flying kites from the rooftops of their homes, and watched the red, black, green and white colors soar above the checkpoints, the separation wall, and settlements on hilltops. I was struck that this childhood pastime was a creative act of resistance.

- Molly Fair
One of the most universally popular symbols we've seen here (second only to the Palestinian flag) is the cartoon image of Handala. He is a young Palestinian refugee, tattered and back-turned, refusing to grow-up until he can return to his homeland. He is seen as a symbol of popular defiance, and appears in graffiti, on t-shirts, key chains, car decals, and in shop windows. Handala was created by Naji al-Ali, a Palestinian cartoonist who was exiled in 1948 (at age 10), and murdered in 1987 by an unknown assailant at a time when Israel was on an assassination spree of the Palestinian Left.

—Josh MacPhee
Three days into the delegation and I am still without words. Everywhere we go this beautiful land is scarred with the evidence of occupation, suffocation, and violence. The rolling hills are pocked with crags and decorated with olive trees. Those hills, the bright blue sky, the proudly waving Palestinian flags seem dwarfed by the Wall, the settlements, the Israeli flags, the checkpoints, the army vehicles, the weaponry, the cameras. For me, this is hard to reconcile, to articulate despite the immense amount of reading and research I have done, personal stories I have heard, and documentaries I have watched. The actual gut feelings these sights elicit are so far inexpressible. The beauty and the horror. The idyllic and the obscene. The pride and the greed. The power and the resistance. Everywhere a contradiction. Even - especially - the fields and the trees are under siege, fighting for their very existence. The images I see while we travel sometimes distract me from the actual meetings because I must work so hard to understand what it is I have just witnessed before even hearing from the people themselves. But when the conversations start, I hear the human version of the stories the land told me as we drove. The stories are complex, nuanced, powerful, inspiring, and distressing. I think I need to wait to unpack the actual conversations we had at Birzeit University and Al Bireh Public Library because I cannot keep my eyes open. I must sleep. I have not slept more than 3 hours at a time since arriving five days ago except for night #2. Writing the emails home each night are my only processing time, and even there I find myself spitting out facts instead of talking about my experience. Hopefully we will get a little more rest soon or my head might explode with information, ideas, images, and gratitude - none of which I've had the words to write about. Perhaps tomorrow the words will flow. Salam.
The first school libraries for Jewish schools in Palestine were established in 1927.

The first school libraries for Palestinian schools within '48 were established in 1992.

In Haifa, there are 21 public library branches serving Jews and one serving Palestinians. This branch is run by an NGO.

Local Palestinian councils in '48 are on the receiving end of budgetary discrimination. One school librarian told us her library's annual budget was $250.

(photograph of the Baha'i Terraces on Mount Carmel, Haifa)
On June 30th we met with ADDIPEER Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association.

Palestinians have been detained by Israel since 1967 (approx. 400,000).

There are occupied territories.

During their presentation we learned about the overall situation for prisoners in Palestine.

This makes visiting prisoners very difficult.

All prisons but one are located in Israel, in violation of the Geneva Convention.

17 security prisons.

3 detention centers.

4 interrogation centers.
Many arrests occur at night. People are awoken from sleep and beaten during arrest.

Torture is common, and includes: isolation, stress positions, sleep and sensory deprivation, beatings.

Palestinians are tried in military court, the conviction rate is 99%.

700 children are arrested each year, many of whom are subjected to physical violence.

Administrative detention allows Israel to hold prisoners indefinitely without charge.

In July 2012 there were 289 administrative detainees, including members of Palestinian legislature.
PLACES WE'VE VISITED

The following is a list of some of the organizations we visited during our delegation.

Archives/Special Collections
Kenyon Institute (Jerusalem)
Dar El-Faros, Nazareth and Lattakia (Syria)
Arab Studies Society - Orient House (Jerusalem and East Jerusalem)

Prisoners Section, Nablus Public Library (Nablus)
Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights (Bethlehem)

Municipal Libraries
Nablus Public Library (Nablus)
Ramallah Public Library (Ramallah)
El-Bireh Public Library (El-Bireh)
Tulkarm Public Library (Tulkarm)

Family/Personal Libraries
Khalil Family Library (Jerusalem)
Aref al-Aqsa Family Library (Jerusalem)
Budeiri Family Library (Jerusalem)

Academic Libraries/Archives
Birzeit University Libraries (Birzeit)
Birzeit Palestine Archive Project (Birzeit)
Al-Quds University Library (Abu Dis)
Al-Quds American Studies Department (Abu Dis)
Khaduri Library (Tulkarm)

Children's Libraries
Nablus Children Library (Nablus)
El-Bireh Public Library (El-Bireh)
Various grade school libraries (Bethlehem)

Museums
Palestinian Museum (Ramallah)
Return of Qastel Museum/Safouriyyah Association (Jerusalem)
Abu Iyad Prisoners Museum and Archive (Abu Dis)

Cultural Centres
Madaba Center and Library (Silwan, Jerusalem)
Yafa Cultural Center (Balata Refugee Camp, Nablus)
Jafar Center (Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem)
Al-Ra'awdah Cultural & Theatre Society (Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem)
Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre (Ramallah)

Moving Image Collections/Media Centers/Publishers
Wadi Niswah Information Center (Jerusalem)
Tamer Institute for Community Education (Bethlehem/Ramallah)

Subversive Films (Ramallah)
Shasheh (Ramallah)

Activist Groups/NGOs
Boycott from Within (Jerusalem)
Anarchists Against the Wall (Jerusalem)
Grassroots Al-Quds (Jerusalem)
B'Tselem/The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (Jerusalem)
Zochrot (Tel-Aviv)
Yaffa Youth (Yaffa)
Tamimi Press (Nabi Saleh)
Addameer/Prisoner and Human Rights Association (Ramallah)
BDS National Committee and PACBI (Ramallah)
Al-Qaws (Ramallah)
EWAH (Ramallah)
Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (Ramallah)

Other Activities
Jonathan Coox walking tour, including of Safouriyyah (Nazareth)
Walking tour with Tamer Nasar from DAM (Lydd)
Walking tour of Nablus's old city with Beesan Ramadan (Nablus)
Conversation with human geographer Sa'id Abu-Hijleh (Nablus)
Walking tour of Yaffa with Sami Abu-Shehadeh (Yaffa)
Walking tour of Hebron with Hisham Sharabati (Hebron)
we recommend

non-fiction

Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation * Saree Makdisi
Sharon and My Mother In Law * Suad Amiry
The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine * Ilan Pappe
Prisoners Diaries * ed. Norma Hashim
Palestinian Walks * Raja Shehadeh

film

The Time That Remains * Elia Suleiman
Sling Shot Hip Hop * Jackie Salloum
When I Saw You * Annemarie Jacir
The Great Book Robbery * Benny Brunner
Children of Shatila * Mai Masri

musicians

Kamilya Jubran
DAM
Shadia Mansour
Sabreen
Mohammad Assaf

poets

Suheir Hammad
Mahmoud Darwish
Taha Muhammad Ali
Rafeef Ziadah
Remi Kanazi

novels

Touch * Adania Shibl
Time of White Horses * Ibrahim Nasrallah
Men in the Sun * Ghassan Kanafani
Wild Thorns * Sahar Khalifeh
Mornings in Jenin * Susan Abulhawa

children's books

The Boy and the Wall * Lajee Center youth, Aida Refugee Camp
Ghadhar the Ghoul and Other Palestinian Stories * Sonia Nimr
Where the Streets Had a Name * Randa Abdel-Fattah
Awwal Zahra Fi'il Ard * Zakaria Mohammed + Ahmed Al-Khaldy
Al Ta'Al-Marbouta Tateer * Ibtisam Barakat + Hosni Radwan

art & food

The Palestinian Kitchen * Madaa Creative Center, Silwan
A Child In Palestine: The Cartoons of Naji al-Ali
Palestinian Art 1850-2005 * Kamal Boullata
Gaza Kitchen * Laila el Haddad
Palestine * Joe Sacco
Authors, artists, and photographers of the preceding excerpts of the *Librarians and Archivists to Palestine DS128.4 Zine* are:

Blair Kuntz, *Interrogation at Israeli Border Station Aqaba-Eilat* (p.166), is a proud red diaper baby who became critical of Zionism after witnessing Israeli brutality first hand, first in Lebanon then in Palestine.

Amy Greer, *Day 3, June 24* (p. 167), is a youth services public librarian, doctoral student, and community organizer who now incorporates za’atar, sage tea, and maqluba into her regular diet since her return from Palestine.

Molly Fair, *kids flying kites* (p. 168-9), is an archivist and artist living in Brooklyn, and new fan of Arab Idol winner Mohammed Assaf.

When he is not reading, writing, designing, studying, or hoarding books, Josh Mac Phee, *Handala* (p.170-171) and *Places We’ve Visited* (p. 175), helps run the Interference Archive in Brooklyn, NY.

Vani Natarajan, *Haifa* (p. 172) and *we recommend* (p. 176), is an academic librarian, writer, and activist living in Brooklyn. One of her all-time favorite BDS activities involved singing and dancing to a rewritten Spice Girls song, inside a New York City Best Buy store, in protest of David Beckham’s Motorola endorsement.

Maggie Schreiner, *on June 30th* (p. 173-4), is an archivist and community organizer living in Brooklyn.

The electronic version of the full text of the zine can be found at http://librarians2palestine.wordpress.com/zine/. Paper copies can be ordered online from JustSeeds Artists’ Cooperative at http://www.justseeds.org/justseeds_collaborations/04lapzine.html